

fore and where she probably has never been. A biographer, knowing how tempting it is to build up theories and also aware of the limitations imposed by evidence, must inevitably feel sceptical when he reads, for example, that Dorothy Wordsworth was the primary and Annette Vallan the secondary inspiration of the poem "Ruth." No doubt it is the prerogative of a sensitive and intelligent reader to see in poetry more than meets the eye, as it is the virtue of great poetry to contain infinite varieties of meaning destined to be unfolded successively with the lapse of time and change of taste and fresh needs of men. But, to take another example, Mr. Fausset violates several probabilities when he contends—and he does contend dogmatically—that the mysterious subject of those exquisite five so-called "Lucy" poems is a combination of Annette and Dorothy. This is too fantastic. Wordsworth never, in his most characteristic or most inspired poems, worked in an element removed from actuality and was not capable of putting together such a monster, *undique collatis membris*.

Yet it must be admitted that Mr. Fausset discovers several instances of probable allegory suggested by the memory of Annette. No doubt the young poet, during his residence in France in 1792, lost not only innocence but the strength and the peace of mind that innocence confers. No doubt this was one cause of those self-tormenting investigations of right and wrong which resulted, several years later, in his yielding up moral questions in despair and seeking to find once more in nature the guide, the guardian of his heart and soul of all his moral being. In examining this interaction between moral conflict and spontaneous joy, Mr. Fausset is brilliantly successful, until he passes beyond the year 1798, by which time that particular phase of the strife was nearly over. Then new problems faced the poet and new powers were conferred upon him. Of these Mr. Fausset takes too little account. He applies his formula of remorse and defense-mechanism to the half-century of life in which political, economic, and domestic motives came more and more into play. That they affected the later Wordsworth disastrously there is no denying. As Mr. Fausset well says: "He inevitably gravitated to the timid and negative Tory side, sharing its panic, its concern for rights and privileges, its anxiety to preserve the past as long as it could against the inroads of the future." He acquiesced in the acquisitiveness and the militarism of an age which rejected the Revolutionary belief "in reason and the perfectability of man, the conception that both nations and individuals should serve as members of one harmonious society." He failed to "foresee how fatal war was to prove in an industrialized and mechanized world." Had he been true to himself by forgetting himself, had he scorned his fears, had he preserved the generous human sympathies of his youth, he might have diverted the course of history into happier channels. This is the second part of Mr. Fausset's thesis, which he has developed with persuasiveness.

George MacLean Harper, who has recently retired from Princeton University, is one of the outstanding authorities on Wordsworth in this country.

The Pulitzer Prize committee, in honoring Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of Sections in American History" (Henry Holt), honored the force making for vitality in their other 1932 choices. T. S. Stribling's "The Store" (Doubleday, Doran) is a sectional novel about the south; its drama is multiplied by currents which produced the Civil War. Allan Nevins's "Grover Cleveland" (Dodd, Mead) revels in regional detail; it is a history of Buffalo and northern New York State for the Gilded Age, as well as a biography. Archibald MacLeish's "Conquistador" (Houghton Mifflin) turns back to our origins as a continental dwelling place for various European strains. Maxwell Anderson's "Both Your Houses" (Samuel French) alone escapes sectional influence. But he proclaims a pox on the Federal government's impotence because sectional differences prevent the expression of any disinterested national will.

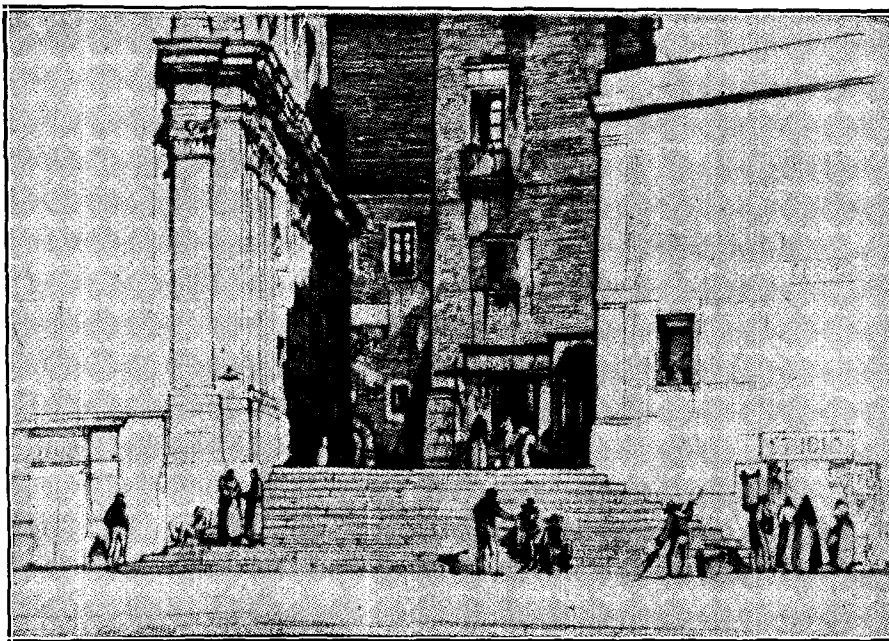
Mr. Douglas At Home

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never see again." His book is thus, in a sense, a kind of catalogue raisonné of the men and women (mostly women) he has known, but arranged quite regardless of chronological order. Yet in telling of these people he reveals himself, and the reader is thus placed in a position to build up for himself the living Douglas as a boy, as a young man, and as what he is now as a ripened citizen of the world. To accomplish this in the Douglas manner that "emphasis on individuality" impressed on him by his early friend, Professor Leydig of Wurzburg, was demanded. The admonition, which he took to heart, supplied him with "a formula for avoiding those flat lands of life where men absorb each other's habits and opinion to such an extent that nothing is left save a herd of flurried automata." Certainly Douglas is no flurried automaton. From another friend, Le Comte Campo Alegre, he learned another lesson, "that life was too short for anything but the best." The Comte had "taken life by the throat in many lands and it yielded every pleasure, legitimate or otherwise, which it had to offer." He scorned the civilized attitude.

was an attaché there. I am wondering if this is the same Esterhazy I knew in London. My Esterhazy was the villain in the Dreyfus Case, and a character. We got on very well together despite the fact that I couldn't speak his French and he couldn't speak my English. But I understood him and he understood me after I had bought a French dictionary of argot. His appellation for the publisher, for whom I was then reader, still rings in mine ancient ear and would tickle even Douglas's Edmund Barton, Corvo's last companion in his miserable poverty; but it is unprintable.

Ah, yes, Baron Corvo was a phenomenon, but he was his own worst enemy. I knew him well and I agree with every word Norman Douglas writes of him. But he has passed on so let him rest in peace—if he can. I regret Douglas's dismissal of Frederic Chapman with a mere name; but perhaps he did not know this brain of the Bodley Head. I can assure him that he was a great-hearted gentleman with a real mind in whose company Douglas would have found God's plenty. "Frankie" Harris of course could not be omitted from Douglas's gallery and his etching of him is to the life—a Balkan conspirator and a swashbuckler "with a reverence for all



SAN STEFANO, CAPRI.

From an Etching by Louis C. Rosenberg ("Fine Prints of the Year 1932," Minton, Balch).

"Your vulgarian," he told Douglas, "cannot achieve this point of view. For all his effrontery he is a slave—a slave to his own poor soul, to a thousand prejudices and taboos." If Douglas's book proves anything it proves to a demonstration that its writer is not that kind of a vulgarian.

As I was reading this fascinating autobiographical excursion I was continually being transported into an Elizabethan day. I seemed to be reading a modern Hakluyt. For here is a man of that same reckless, adventurous spirit with whom it is a delight to travel anywhere and everywhere. I could well believe that this reincarnated son of the Renaissance would have chortled with glee to play that practical joke the dramatist Shakespeare is reported to have played on Richard Burbage, the actor. There is in this man a gusto for life and a spirit of gladness to abandon to it as well as a generous acceptance of its offerings which are rejuvenating and enhancing in their virility.

Among the many hundreds of people here revitalized I knew but a few, but the portraits here presented of these are so in accord with my own experiences of them that I am quite willing to take the rest for granted. I should have enjoyed meeting Maestro Vincenzo, that deft and gentle mason, who partly built Douglas's house in Capri but was unhappily prevented from finishing his job by being arrested for double murder. Poor devil, he liked girls, "but they make one suffer," he said. Alas, *la libidine ha non fine*. Mrs. Annie Bertram Webb, the New England lady, is another strange piece of humanity that must have been an experience to know; but, I protest, she deserved a larger charity of treatment, for her heart could be beneficently moved. An Esterhazy is mentioned, the Secretary to the French Embassy in St. Petersburg when Douglas

that is admirable in art or literature." Of D. H. Lawrence Douglas furnishes the only sane estimate of the man I have yet read. The sketch of Rupert Brooke is worth reprinting:—

Brooke a vertebrate. His was a positive gift, a yea-saying to life—the poet's first requisite. The animal in him was not atrophied, as in so many of us. He was assimilative and zestful, unafraid of realities, responsive to phenomena. The spoilt-darling phase was nearing its end when he died in Tris Boukes Bay.

"Life and death are in the hands of the tongue," is a saying of the Jewish rabbis. In Norman Douglas's hands there is life abundant.

Platitudes

(Continued from first page)

platitude, nothing remains the same thing so much as change, and in between starvation on the one hand and death by violence on the other, the chief desires and sorrows of the human race go on pretty much the same in crisis and out of it. On the whole, there is more to be learned of current truth in Plato, Samuel Butler, and Emerson (a frightful platitude) than in *The Saturday Evening Post*, and much more likelihood that the male described by Fielding and the female depicted by Stendhal will be recognizable in 2033 than that the prophecies everyone is peddling will ever come near enough the future to be worth remembering. Have your world as in your time, by all means, but don't forget (a platitude) that life goes on, and has been a long time going, which is something that the really good books were written to record.

Mr. Canby, who will be abroad for the next few months, will write an occasional editorial only. The remainder, until after Labor Day, will be written by other members of the Editorial Staff.

BOOKS IN THE NEWS

ON the afternoon of May 2, in Yorkville Court, Don Quixote Sumner of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice opened his latest battle against the windmills of the "lewd, lascivious, and indecent" in literature. The book that had aroused his ire, and his concern for the morals of thousands who never read books, anyway, was "God's Little Acre," by Erskine Caldwell, a tall tale of some never-never land which the author specifies as being Georgia (Viking, Publisher).

It must be said that Mr. Sumner did not show to advantage. Magistrate Benjamin Greenspan listened patiently to the charge that Mr. Caldwell's book was pornography, asked just whom Sumner represented, dipped interestedly into "God's Little Acre" when it was placed in evidence, permitted Wolfgang Schwabacher, attorney for the Viking Press, to read a list of the highly reputable Viking authors (including Alfred E. Smith and Rabbi Wise), and announced that His Honor must reserve decision until May 23 if he was going perforce into the business of literary criticism. When Mr. Schwabacher likened John S. Sumner to Hitler in Germany, the Magistrate chuckled. "You wouldn't compare him to Hitler," he remonstrated, "surely he can't be as bad as that." But Mr. Schwabacher couldn't be dissuaded; Sumner was a Hitler, that was all there was to it. The assembled taxi-drivers, bootleggers, and night club proprietors, waiting their turn before the Magistrate, thoroughly enjoyed the proceedings. They, too, had come into contact with repressive measures (sired by Volstead, not Sumner), and they grinned at the solemn Sumner's discomfiture.

Caldwell himself, Maxim Lieber, his literary agent, Marshall Best and Ben Huebsch of the Viking Press, and other devotees of belles lettres, were in the crowd, straining to catch the overtones from beyond the railing where Sumner was standing, hands behind his back. A joke to the taxi-drivers, the hearing was serious enough to them. A decision in favor of the Vice Society might set an unholy precedent that would catch more than one author and publisher. Caldwell looked perturbed until the Magistrate gave evidence of having a sense of humor. But the author of "God's Little Acre" expressed delight when someone, on leaving the court, referred to Sumner as "God's Little Belly Acher." That was quite in the spirit of Mr. Caldwell's own humor in "Tobacco Road" and other fables, including the book under Sumner's fire.

"As a day of commemoration April 23 is getting too crowded for comfort," says the *London Observer*. "Even when it was shared between Shakespeare and St. George it was full enough, and as the two cults have extended the jostling has been severe. The 23rd is also the day of Wordsworth's death (1850), but the public cannot in reason be expected to remember two poets in one day. A doubtful claimant is Cervantes, who died on the same date as Shakespeare, though not on the same day: a paradox which resolves itself when one remembers calendar differences."

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Backwash of Revolution

OTHER FIRES. By MAXIM GORKY. Translated by ALEXANDER BAKSHY. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1933. \$3.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

GORKY'S new novel deals with the backwash of the 1905 revolution. Clim Samghin, a lawyer and in politics a Social Revolutionary, through whose eyes its jumble of characters and events are viewed, would appear to be Gorky himself. At any rate, the author and his principal character have much in common.

It isn't an easy book to read. It has, it seems to me, all those disabilities from which the once peasant-genius began to suffer when he "got politics," could no longer look at life simply and objectively, and must needs turn everything into a sort of social treatise. I must confess to have waded through a considerable part of the book without getting much more out of it than if it had been written in Chinese. The latter part, when Clim gets mixed up with the antics of a group of Russian Holy Rollers, seemed to clear up a bit, but even here I could not quite grasp what the author intended to be the alluring Marinas' significance. She is the attractive widow, part fat merchant's wife, part a sort of pagan priestess, with whom the restless, intellectually-bewildered Samghin keeps fussing during the latter half of the story.

"Cynicism and tears," Samghin thought, after he had seen her, through a peek-hole, leading the Holy Rollers' rites, "Something perverse, dark—I must keep farther away from her." Samghin suddenly went abroad, and there the book ends, without further explanation. Gorky himself went abroad shortly after the 1905 revolution, and in 1907 began his life at Capri. Possibly the full meaning of Samghin's adventure with Marina will be brought out in a later story.

He speaks, in analyzing Samghin's traits, of "the deformity of Russian life and the fatal unruliness of the human mind that they 'explained to order with actuality.' Deformity, unruliness, discord with character, not only of a large part of the characters in "Other Fires," but of the point of view of the author himself. In so far as these traits are Russian traits, it might be urged that the novel succeeds in conveying the thing intended. But it is one thing, surely, to say that a certain character was fuzzy in his thinking and quite another to have the authors' own drawing of that character fuzzy. We constantly feel in "Other Fires," I think, the subjective struggles and bewilderment of Gorky himself, the tormented searchings of one who has been on both sides of so many barricades—peasant and intellectual, Bolshevik and not-Bolshevik, anti-Czar and yet not quite Soviet, artist and pamphleteer, broken off from the old yet not quite rooted in the new; a man tired, harassed, no longer able to see anything simply.

There are flashes throughout this long procession of street fights, hold-ups, assassinations, flares of rebellion, cloudy conversations, of Gorky's native ability, but little clearness in pattern or in content. And I fear that most ordinary American readers will find it disappointing.

Spanish California

RANCHERO. By STEWART EDWARD WHITE. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1933. \$2.50.

READERS of Stewart Edward White's "The Long Rifle" will not be surprised to find in this book, in which its hero reappears, a lively tale, spiced with picturesque incident and cast against a background bright with local color. "Ranchero" carries Andy Burnett, the trapper, across the Great Divide into Southern California, thrusting him in the course of his hazardous journey into a friendly encounter with Indians, a violent set-to with Mexicans, a romantic friendship with a spirited young hidalgo, and a whirlwind courtship of the latter's sister.

Mr. White's tale is in type a familiar one, but it takes on character from the

vividness with which its setting is presented and the detail which builds up the picture of a past which took so much of its color from Spain. His portrayal of life in hacienda and mission, with its mixture of gallantry and rudeness, its persistence of Spanish mores together with pioneer adventure, is spirited and glamorous and at the same time wears the stamp of authenticity. So much of the emphasis of Mr. White's narrative goes on incident that it is only on reflection that the historical value of "Ranchero" becomes apparent. That, however, is sufficient to lend the book an interest, even a distinction, lacking to most tales of its kind. Its first interest, of course, is in its story which is a good, vigorous yarn, but that story gains immensely from the meticulous care with which its "business" has been worked out.

Sheer Narrative

MAN WANTS BUT LITTLE. By WILSON WRIGHT. New York: A. & C. Boni. 1933.

Reviewed by THEODORE PURDY, JR.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Wright's novel amply demonstrates his qualifications as an expert in things Cuban, the core of his satisfying book is its sheer narrative excellence. There is no room in this full-blooded story for the picturesque, and very little for background of any sort, since the author is preoccupied with character and incident throughout. Yet it gives a remarkably clear picture of a Cuba still unexploited by the American writers of fiction, who have so far confined their efforts largely to the continental mannerisms of Havana, neglecting the more characteristic life of the sugar plantations and mines in the interior. The period of wild speculation during and just after the war when paper for-



WILSON WRIGHT.

tunes were made and lost with a fluency unequalled even in Wall Street forms the economic frame for Mr. Wright's story. Even his young mine worker, fresh from Spain, necessarily feels the effects of this unrest, however indirectly, and in José Perdriga and María Sanclemente—some-what belatedly his wife—the author has recreated the average couple's experience during these years with admirable directness. Although always desirous of quiet and a simple life on his own plantation, José is involved in a political murder, a revolution, of some importance, an abduction, and at least a dozen other events which would be sufficiently unusual in the history of a mere Anglo-Saxon.

The really great quality of Mr. Wright's book is that he makes all this seem intelligible and acceptable, free from melodrama, and lightened by a charming humor. That there are millions of such lives, outwardly confusing but inwardly as logical as those of most business men in America, any reading of Latin-American history will prove. The perfect normality of such an extraordinary program of existence under circumstances differing but slightly from those obtaining in the great—and unfortunately far from popular—sister republic of the North is explained largely by racial and climatic considerations into which Mr. Wright wisely does not go. Instead, he is content to interpret these people in the simplest and subtlest way, by presenting their daily life without idealizing or decrying it. His book is excellent narrative, valuable light shed on our least understood neighbor.

American Humor

MISS LONELYHEARTS. By NATHANIEL WEST. New York: Liveright, Inc. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by T. C. WILSON

AMERICAN literature of recent years has produced very little vigorous humor. There are indications, however, that certain of the younger writers, notably Erskine Caldwell and Nathanael West, are attempting to restore the comic view of life to its legitimate place in art—Caldwell with his novels "Tobacco Road" and "God's Little Acre," and West with his robust satire, "Miss Lonelyhearts." Their works may ultimately form a contribution to our literature and enrich the tradition of native humor.

"Miss Lonelyhearts" is a comedy with tragic implications. Beneath their surface absurdities the people in this tale are pitifully ineffective and frustrated. The problems and disappointments which they bring to Miss Lonelyhearts, conductor of a New York newspaper column of advice to the distressed, in the belief that he can help them, reveal the futility of their lives. Broken-hearted, Desperate, Disillusioned—with-tubercular husband, and the rest are laughable in their naive letters, but their suffering is depressing. Mr. West presents them with much power. In the character of Miss Lonelyhearts he also exposes the civilization which has produced them. When Miss Lonelyhearts no longer considers his job a joke and circulation stunt, and begins to think of himself as the spiritual adviser to millions of inarticulate sufferers, a kind of modern Christ, he is compelled to search for values to base his philosophy on. He examines various ideals—art, Christ, the soil—but rejects one after another when he finds them all without meaning for him. He is left as helpless and inarticulate as those starved souls he hoped to lead to the light of a new faith.

It is an ironic and bitter humor that arises from such a dilemma—quite unlike the merely amusing type of *New Yorker* fun-poking at superficialities. Mr. West pierces beneath the surfaces of his material. The tragic lives of his characters impress us even more powerfully because they are made to seem stupid and comic. We may laugh with the author at these people, but we recognize the essential seriousness which has given his writing its impetus. "Miss Lonelyhearts" is a solid work as well as a brilliant one. Mr. Dreiser would have made a tragedy out of this material; Mr. West, in making a satiric comedy of it, has perhaps given a more adequate rendering of men whose warped lives do not offer any theme considerable enough for tragedy.

An Arctic Middletown

ARCTIC VILLAGE. By ROBERT MARSHALL. New York: Harrison Smith & Robert Haas. 1933. \$3.

Reviewed by DAINES BARRINGTON

IN 1899, far beyond Dawson and Klondike, gold was discovered in the upper valley of the Koyukok. Since that date five million dollars worth of the metal has been taken from an area equalling in size that of Massachusetts and New Jersey. Of the 350 white settlers which the region has at no time exceeded, only about twenty-five have accumulated more than \$2,000.

The population of the valley today comprises seventy-seven whites, of whom seven are women, forty-four Eskimos, and six Indians. Wiseman, which is the largest community, boasts forty-eight houses, is two hundred miles from the nearest pavement, 150 from the nearest doctor, and 175 from the nearest church. A frontier mining town, whose past has been brief, and whose spirit is virile and dauntless, if callow, it offers an interesting field for sociological investigation. To gain an insight into its character and conditions of living, Mr. Marshall took up residence for some time within its borders. His book describes in meticulous detail and with particular emphasis on environment the specialized society of the community, reflecting it in large part through the comment of its inhabitants.

The temperature range of the region is,

according to Mr. Marshall, a broad one. The thermometer, even in a mild winter, falls as low as -50°, while in summer it occasionally reaches 90° in the shade. Three months of continuous daylight, and the warmth of the summer season, are sufficient to produce a luxuriant vegetable life. Mr. Marshall quotes in this connection a turnip which reached eleven and a quarter inches in diameter. On the other hand, the darkness of the Arctic winter, in Mr. Marshall's opinion, has a subtly depressing and irritating influence upon the disposition of the inhabitants. As evidence of this conclusion he cites the fact that the



From the Jacket Design of "Arctic Village."

number of quarrels rose from two a month in summer to about six in winter.

Of the members of this isolated Arctic village, only four have ever been to college. Yet the Stanford-Binet test shows the number of Koyukokers in the superior intelligence class to be four times as great as among normal Americans. Of the topics which most engaged the attention of the population, investigation revealed that "bad times" interested more persons than anything else, though there was one among them who stood out for "the curse of Tutankhamon's tomb." Thirty-three of the isolated group believe in a hereafter, and thirty-seven do not; fifty-four are favorably inclined to their life in the far North, twelve are discontented, and nine are neutral in their attitude. In the entire history of the region, three, and only three, murders have taken place, and there has been no single instance of a person of one race inflicting injury upon one of another.

On the whole, of course, the basic problems of this Arctic community are those which universally prevail, but the smallness and simplicity of the settlement make it a fertile field for sociological study. Mr. Marshall, in recording the facts which exhaustive observation disclosed, has presented a valuable and interesting record.

Stage Business

SINCE IBSEN. By GEORGE JEAN NATHAN. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1933. \$1.65.

UNDER a mockingly pretentious title that promises a "statistical historical outline of the popular theatre since 1900," Mr. Nathan has written a witty catalogue of the stock situations, overworked stage business, and other abuses of drama familiar to American and European theatres. Although his foreword confines the lampoons to the popular theatre, the book does not spare our most intelligent plays and playwrights. Among the anonymous personalities, one easily recognizes O'Neill, Barry, Walter Hampden, Lenore Ulric, and Ruth Draper, and the untitled plays include "Berkeley Square," "The House Beautiful," and "Dinner at Eight." The book is an amusing picture of what has amused the masses and tormented the critics and sophisticates for thirty years and more, heartless in its restrained burlesque but not despairing. What theatregoer has not been plagued by "the play in which Lady Gwen Wyncote, sister of the Earl of Drivelington, goes to the rooms of Dwight Sutro, the vulgar but rich fellow in trade, to sacrifice her virginity in order to redeem her brother's debt of honor"? It is a chronicle to be read in short sittings.